

Bill sparks fiery debate on gay rights

Hate-crimes measure clears House panel

By **Angela Dire**/Gazette Telegraph

DENVER — Attacking or threatening people because they are gay, disabled or elderly would become a hate crime under a bipartisan proposal that on Wednesday easily cleared its first legislative hurdle.

The House Judiciary Committee voted 9-4 to approve the proposal after an emotional hearing that left some lawmakers in tears.

Rep. Marcy Morrison, R-Colorado Springs, joined the majority despite political pressure to oppose the bill because of its protection for gays.

"I had phone calls saying don't support House Bill 1257 because of 'those' people," Morrison said. "I guess that sent my red flag up. Thirty years ago, it was black people who were 'those people.' Fifty years ago, it was Jews who were 'those people.' If I had not supported this bill I would not have been true to my own values."

Those voting against the bill, including Rep. Doug Lamborn, R-Colorado Springs, said they had a philosophical problem with a law that treats the same crime differently depending upon its circumstances. They also worried it would stifle free speech.

Sponsored by six Republicans and five Democrats, the proposal would expand Colorado's ethnic intimidation law to include physical or mental disability, age and sexual orientation. The current law covers race, color, ancestry, religion and na-

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**COLORADO
LEGISLATIVE
SESSION**

■ Measure would expand "Make My Day" law/**B3**

continues, and many Chechens remain distrustful and in hiding./A8

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CITY/REGION

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STATE

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OPINION

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BUSINESS

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Massacre r

An Israeli soldier frls on his way to the T Tuesday in the Occr Hebron. A year after fire at the mosque, k remain high. WORLD/

SPORTS

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Legislature/Colorado for Family Values opposes bill

From A1

tional origin.

The law allows victims and their family members to sue perpetrators for civil damages and it stiffens the criminal penalties for some offenses.

Assault or property damage involving hate crimes would carry tougher penalties than those crimes usually do — though that wouldn't be the case for all crimes. For instance, a rapist whose offense included a hate crime probably wouldn't spend any more time in prison unless the judge ran the sentences consecutively.

But the bottom line, proponents say, is that hate-crime legislation sends a message to society at large.

"With the enhanced penalty hopefully will come societal awareness that these things are wrong," said Rep. Ken Chlouber, R-Leadville, the bill's primary sponsor. "There's enough hurt in this world without you going around and beatin' up people because of who they are."

A few activists for the disabled testified on behalf of the bill. But the bulk of the testimony focused on gays. As expected, the committee room be-

came a sparring ring for gay rights activists and their opponents.

Greg Rowley of the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Colorado said his office recorded a 13 percent increase in threats and attacks on gays from 1993 to 1994.

Kevin Tebedo of Colorado For Family Values urged the committee not to support what he called a "homosexual advantage bill." Tebedo said voters made it clear when they approved Amendment 2 that they do not want gays to have any specific protection in the law. The mea-

sure, passed by Colorado voters in 1992 but put on hold by the courts, would ban laws protecting gays from discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

The panel of lawmakers asked few questions during the hearing. When the time came to vote, several grew emotional.

As he tried to restrain himself from crying, Rep. Bill Kaufman, R-Loveland, recalled how his father, a World War II veteran, had witnessed the carnage of the Nazi death camps.

"Some of the things I've heard in northern Colorado lately

make me feel we're headed in that direction," he said. "I've never seen so much hate as I've seen in politics in the last three or four years. And I can't do anything to continue that hatred. I was leaning toward voting against this bill, but I'm going to support it now and when it gets to the floor."

Others, concerned they would be misunderstood as condoning violence and hatred, voted against the bill somewhat warily.

"I would hope you would not perceive a vote against this bill as hate," Rep. Jeanne Adkins, R-

Parker. "I think it's quite possible that what happened in Germany could happen here. But we have to be careful not to say that a crime against one person is worse than a crime against another."

The proposal now goes to the House Finance Committee — where Colorado for Family Values and other opponents will try to kill it.

"There was a lot of emotion here, but when it gets to the Finance Committee we'll get down to the nuts and bolts," said Tebedo.

budget bill last month.

Hearings on surgeon general nominee delayed:

The White House will not ask the Senate to begin hearings on the nomination of Henry Foster as surgeon general until at least mid-March, a timetable that administration officials believe will leave Foster in better shape to confront his critics.

The four-week delay was described by White House aides Tuesday as necessary to let the FBI complete its background check.

'Cut and gut' approach to education criticized:

President Clinton on Tuesday accused congressional Republicans of approaching education as "just another area to cut and

Panel backs state control over foster care:

A House Ways and Means subcommittee on Tuesday drafted legislation giving states almost complete control over their foster-care programs. The panel rejected Democratic efforts to strengthen federal oversight of those programs and increase funding for homes for abused and neglected children.

Senate committee crafts line-item-veto bill:

The Senate Budget Committee approved a pair of line-item-veto bills Tuesday.

The committee approved letting the president target specific items in spending bills but would

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